

CLAIMS

1. A method for generating a conditional electronic signature,
performed in response to one or more conditions being specified for an
5 electronic signature of a data item, the method comprising the steps of:
 encrypting the data item,
 encrypting the one or more conditions separately from the data item,
 combining the encrypted data item and the encrypted one or more
 conditions, and
10 encrypting the combination to generate a digital signature block
 that inherently represents the data item and the one or more conditions
 and enables cryptographic verification of both the data item and the one
 or more conditions.
- 15 2. A method according to claim 1, wherein each of a plurality of
specified conditions is separately encrypted and combined with the
encrypted data item, and wherein the combination is then further
encrypted.
- 20 3. A method according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the encryption of
the data item and separate encryption of the conditions are each one-way
hashing steps to generate verifiable representations of the data item and
conditions.
- 25 4. A method according to claim 3, wherein the step of combining the
hashed data item and conditions comprises concatenating the hashed data
item and hashed conditions, hashing the product of the concatenation to
produce a final digest, and further encrypting the final digest to
generate a digital signature block.
- 30 5. A method according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the step of
encrypting the combination uses an encryption method for which the result
of (a) combining the encrypted data item and the encrypted one or more
conditions and then encrypting the combination differs from a result of
35 (b) encrypting both the encrypted data item and the encrypted one or more
conditions and then combining the doubly encrypted data item and
conditions.
- 40 6. A method according to claim 5, wherein the encryption method
implements Cipher Block Chaining encryption.

7. A method according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the encryption of the data item and separate encryption of the conditions each use Cipher Block Chaining encryption methods.
- 5 8. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the step of encrypting the combination to generate a digital signature block uses a private key of a public/private key cryptographic solution to produce a conditional signature.
- 10 9. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the step of encrypting the combination to generate a digital signature block uses a symmetric key of a symmetric-key cryptographic solution to produce a conditional signature.
- 15 10. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, including the step of transmitting to a recipient the data item, the one or more conditions and the digital signature block, such that a recipient, who has access to the cryptographic processes used for performing the encrypting steps and has access to a corresponding decryption key, is enabled to:
- 20 decrypt the digital signature block to produce a first result;
 encrypt the data item, encrypt the one or more conditions separately from the data item, and combine the encrypted data item and encrypted one or more conditions to produce a second result; and
 compare the first and second results to determine whether they
- 25 match.
11. A method according to claim 10, including transmitting the encryption algorithms to the recipient.
- 30 12. A method according to claim 10 or claim 11, including transmitting to the recipient the interim results of each encryption step, comprising:
 the encrypted data item; and
 the encrypted one or more conditions.
- 35 13. A method according to any one of claims 10 to 12, wherein the step of encrypting the combination to produce a digitally signed data block uses a private key of a public/private key cryptographic solution, and wherein the method includes transmitting to the recipient the public key of the cryptographic solution.
- 40 14. A method according to any one of claims 10 to 12, wherein the step of encrypting the combination to produce a digitally signed data block

uses a private key of a public/private key cryptographic solution, and wherein the method includes transmitting to the recipient information for obtaining the public key of the cryptographic solution.

5 15. A method according to any one of claims 10 to 14, including compiling a set of encryption results which set includes the results of each step of encrypting, and wherein the step of transmitting includes the step of transmitting the set of encryption results to the recipient.

10 16. A method according to claim 3, including the step of transmitting to a recipient the hashed representations of the data item and conditions and the digital signature block such that a recipient, who has access to the cryptographic process used to perform the step of encrypting the combination and has access to a corresponding decryption key, is enabled
15 to:

decrypt the digital signature block;
combine the hashed representations of the data item and conditions to generate a combined digest; and
compare the decrypted signature block with the combined digest to
20 determine whether they match.

17. A method according to claim 16, wherein the step of combining the hashed representations to generate a combined digest comprises the steps of:

25 concatenating the hashed representations to generate a double digest; and
hashing the double digest to generate a final combined digest.

30 18. A method according to claim 1, wherein each of a plurality of data items is separately encrypted and combined, and the combination is then further encrypted.

19. A method for verifying a conditional electronic signature, generated by a method according to claim 10, comprising the following steps
35 performed in response to receipt by the recipient of the transmitted data item, one or more conditions and the digital signature block:

decrypting the digital signature block to produce a first result;
encrypting the data item, encrypting the one or more conditions separately from the data item, and combining the encrypted data item and
40 encrypted one or more conditions to produce a second result; and
comparing the first and second results to determine whether they match.

20. A computer program comprising program code instructions for controlling the operation of a data processing apparatus on which the program code executes, to perform a method according to claim 1.

5 21. A computer program comprising program code instructions for controlling the operation of a data processing apparatus on which the program code executes, to perform a method according to claim 19.

10 22. A data processing apparatus for generating conditional electronic signatures, comprising:

one or more cryptographic components, responsive to one or more conditions being specified for an electronic signature of a data item, for encrypting the data item, encrypting the one or more conditions separately from the data item, combining the encrypted data item and the encrypted one or more conditions, and encrypting the combination to generate a digital signature block that inherently represents the data item and the one or more conditions and enables cryptographic verification of both the data item and the one or more conditions; and

20 means for transmitting to a recipient the data item, the one or more conditions and the digital signature block.

23. A data processing apparatus for verifying a conditional electronic signature, generated by a method according to claim 10, comprising:

25 means for receiving the transmitted data item, one or more conditions and the digital signature block; and

one or more cryptographic components for: decrypting the digital signature block to produce a first result; encrypting the data item, encrypting the one or more conditions separately from the data item, and combining the encrypted data item and encrypted one or more conditions to produce a second result; and comparing the first and second results to determine whether they match.

35 24. A method for disseminating status information for conditionally signed data items, wherein the conditionally signed data items include executable content for updating a registry in response to one of the conditionally signed data items being forwarded to a recipient or being identified as rejected, the registry maintaining a list of recipients of the data item, the method including the steps of:

40 in response to forwarding of the conditionally signed data item to a new recipient, executing the executable content to update the list of recipients in the registry; and

in response to an indication that the conditionally signed data item is rejected, executing the executable content to update the registry and disseminating an indication that the data item is rejected to each of the recipients in the registry list.

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25. A data processing apparatus for disseminating status information for conditionally signed data items, comprising:

a registry for maintaining a list of recipients of a conditionally signed data item;

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means for recognizing the presence of an executable component within a conditionally signed data item and, responsive to the data item being forwarded to a new recipient, for initiating execution of the executable component to update the list of recipients within the registry; and

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means, responsive to an indication that the data item is rejected, for updating the registry to indicate the rejection and for disseminating an indication that the data item is rejected to each of the recipients in the list.

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26. A computer program comprising program code instructions for controlling the operation of a data processing apparatus on which the program code executes, to perform a method according to claim 24.